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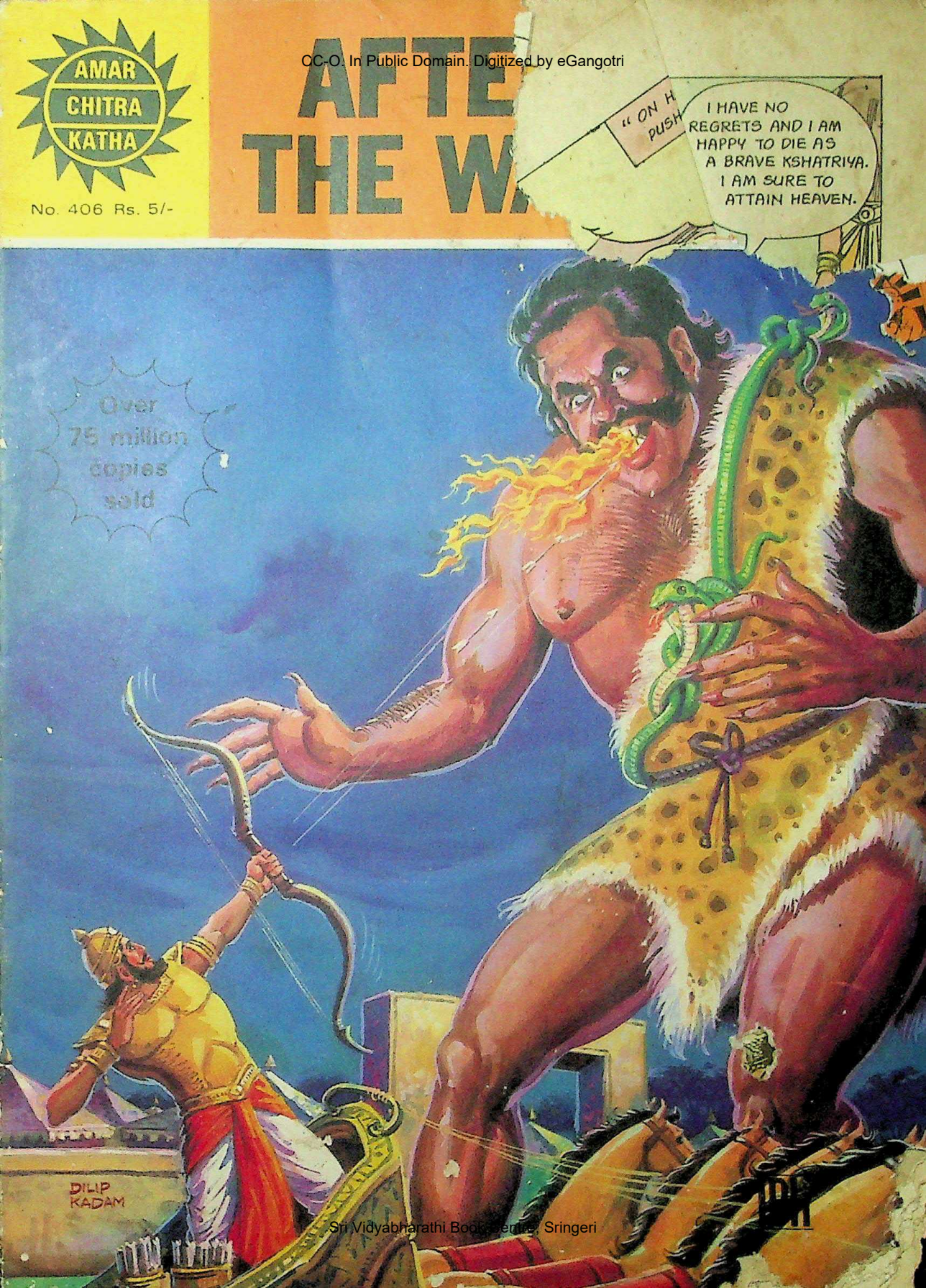

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MAHABHARATA 39

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In the last session of our rendering of the Mahabharata, we saw the beginning of the end of the mighty war. Bheema fought the sons of Dhritarashtra and slew them one by one, until only Duryodhana remained. Unable to face the might of the Pandavas, Duryodhana fled the battlefield and concealed himself in a pool of water. Dared by the Pandavas to come out, he emerged and he and Bheema faced one another in single combat. They fought fiercely with their maces and in the end, Bheema broke Duryodhana's thighs with his mace and thus felled him.

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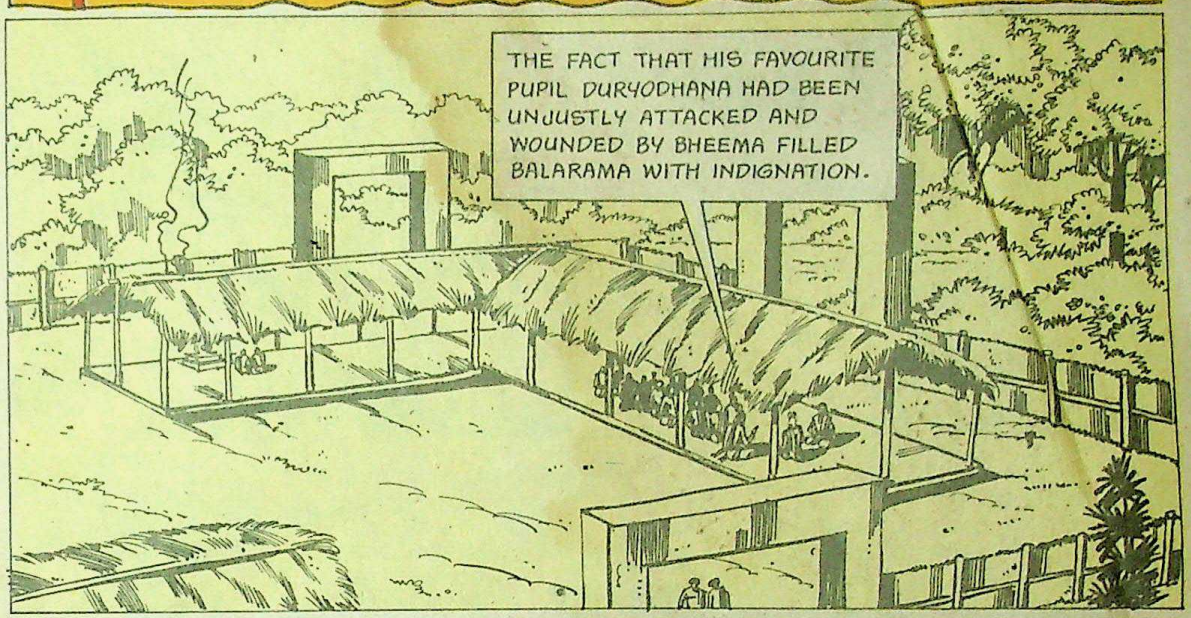

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"IN HIS RAGE, HE RUSHED AT BHEEMA WITH HIS PLOUGH* HELD ALOFT.

KRISHNA TRIED TO RESTRAIN HIM.

THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUCH A DISPLAY OF ANGER AGAINST BHEEMA. REMEMBER HOW HE HAD VOWED TO CRUSH DURYODHANA'S THIGH WHEN DRAUPADI WAS DISGRACED?

YOU CANNOT TOLERATE THIS SINGLE OFFENCE. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HOW THE KAURAVAS KILLED ABHIMANYU? COME, CALM YOURSELF, DEAR BROTHER.

"BALARAMA, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT BE PACIFIED.

I DECLARE BHEEMA'S CONDUCT IN THE WAR AS UNWORTHY OF A KSHATRIYA.

"BALARAMA ASCENDED HIS CHARIOT AND LEFT IN A HUFF.

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* THE PLOUGH WAS BALARAMA'S PERSONAL WEAPON

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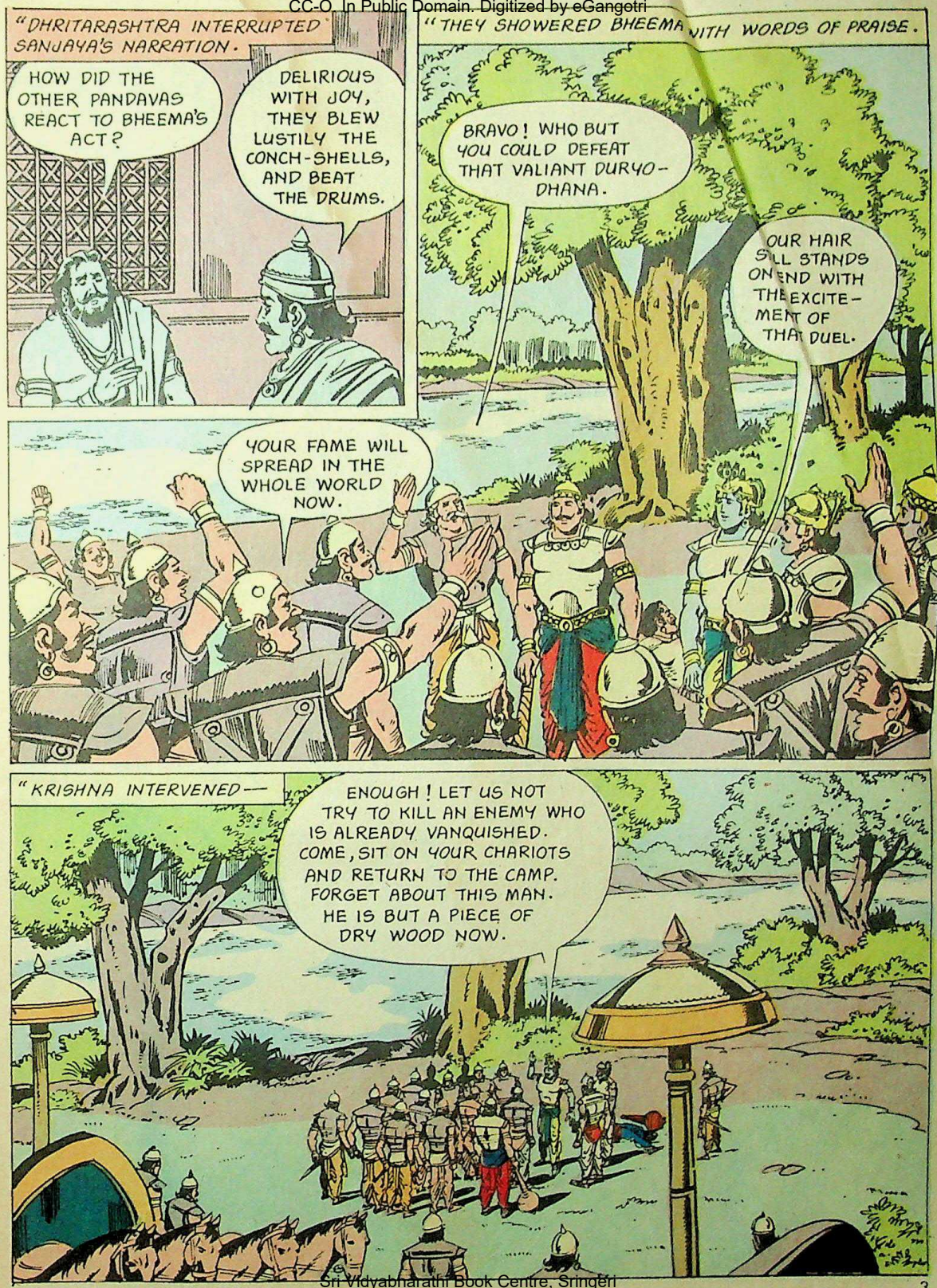

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"ON HEARING KRISHNA SPEAK THUS, DURYODHANA PUSHED HIMSELF UPRIGHT AND EXCLAIMED—

O YOU SON OF A SLAVE! ARE YOU NOT ASHAMED OF YOURSELF? YOU HAVE BEEN UNJUST AND UNKIND TO US ALL THROUGH.

IT WAS YOU WHO REMINDED BHEEMA ABOUT HIS VOW TO BREAK MY THIGHS.

IT WAS YOU WHO CAUSED BHEESHMA'S DOWNFALL BY USING SHIKHANDI AS A FRONT.

WAS IT NOT YOUR IDEA TO MAKE THE RIGHTEOUS YUDHISHTHIRA TELL A LIE THAT ASHWATTHAMA WAS DEAD AND MAKE DRONA TO LAY DOWN ARMS?

YOU LED KARNA TO USE HIS SHAKTI AGAINST GHATOTKACHA, THUS SAVING YOUR OWN DEAR ARJUNA.

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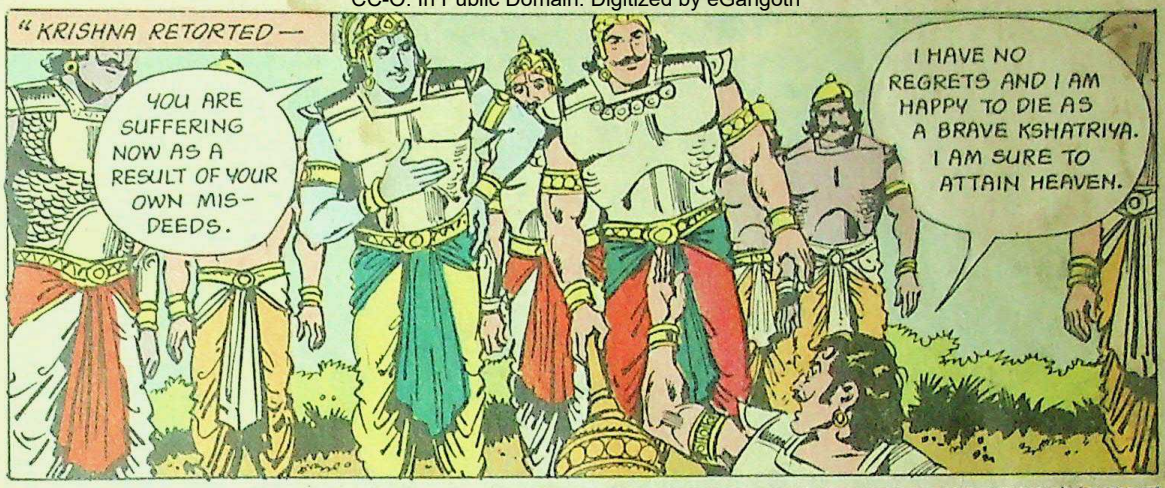

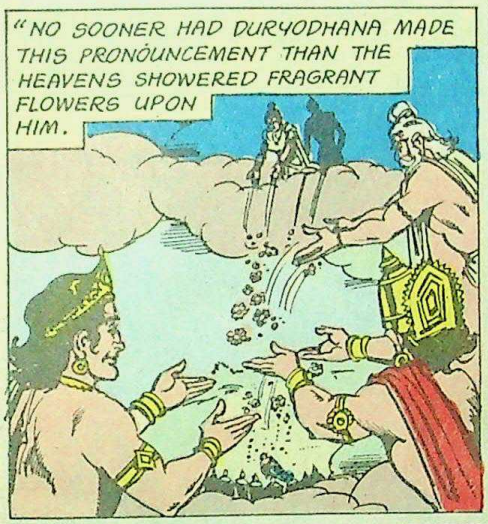

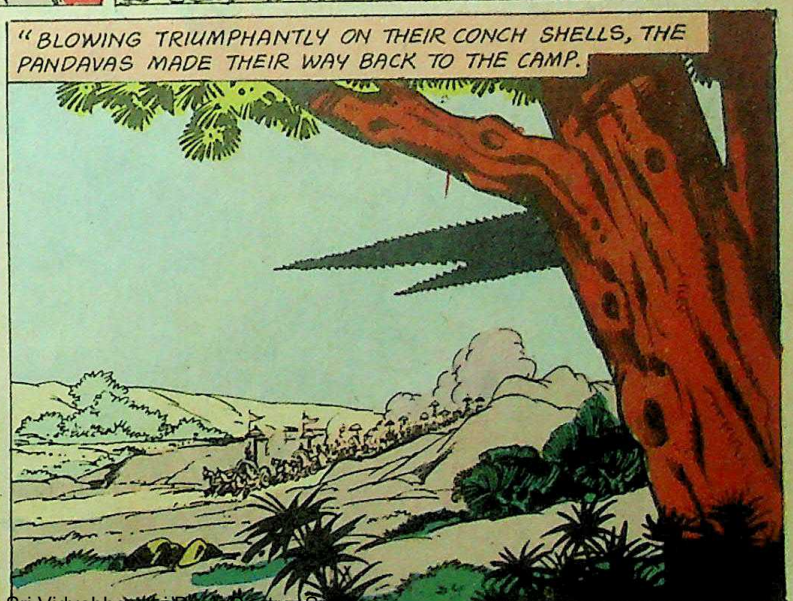

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"THEY FIRST WENT TO DURYODHANA'S QUARTERS, NOW DESERTED AND DESOLATE.

"THE OTHERS GOT DOWN FROM THEIR CHARIOTS. KRISHNA SAID TO ARJUNA —

REMOVE YOUR GANDEEVA AND THE CELESTIAL QUIVERS FROM THE CHARIOT AND COME DOWN.

"AS SOON AS KRISHNA DESCENDED FROM THE CHARIOT, THE MONKEY WHICH HAD ADORNED THE BANNER SO FAR SUDDENLY VANISHED.

"AND THE GREAT CHARIOT, WHICH HAD WITHSTOOD THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS OF DRONA AND KARNA, WENT UP IN FLAMES.

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"IN AN INSTANT THE ENTIRE CHARIOT INCLUDING THE HORSES AND REINS WAS REDUCED TO ASHES.

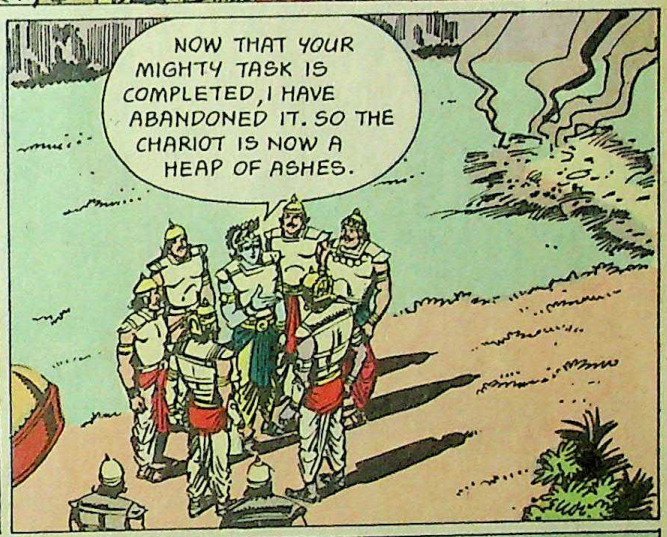
"WHILE THE REST OF THE PANDAVAS WATCHED THIS MIRACLE WITH AWE AND FEAR, ARJUNA FELL AT KRISHNA'S FEET.

O KRISHNA! HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? HOW COULD THE CHARIOT SUDDENLY BE BURNT DOWN?

"KRISHNA GENTLY EXPLAINED —

THIS CHARIOT HAD ALREADY BEEN BURNT AND CHARRED BY THE REPEATED ONSLAUGHT OF THE ENEMY'S WEAPONS. BUT AS LONG AS I SAT IN IT, IT APPEARED TO BE INTACT.

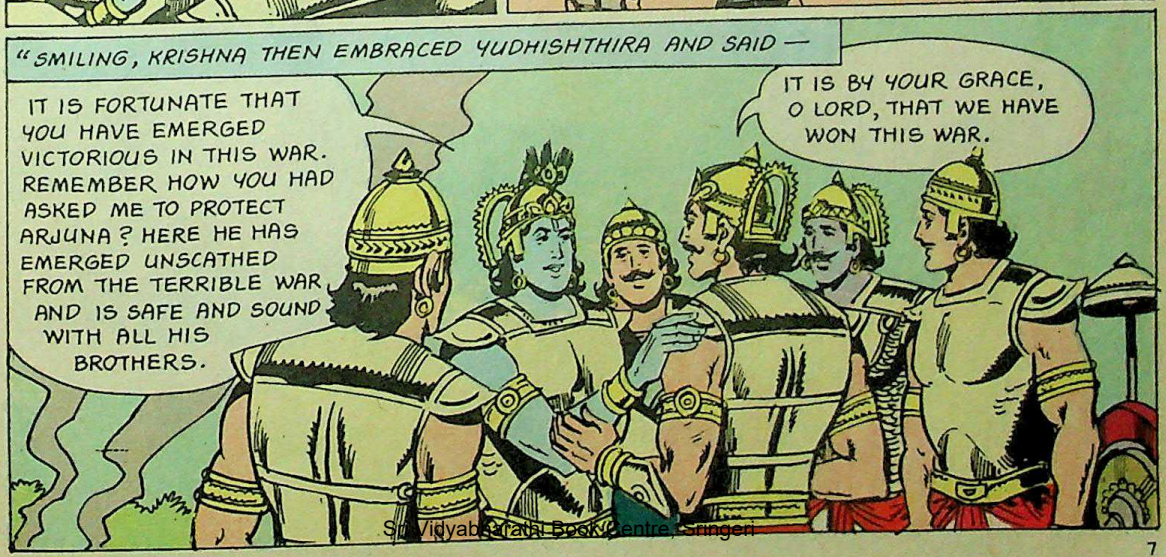
NOW THAT YOUR MIGHTY TASK IS COMPLETED, I HAVE ABANDONED IT. SO THE CHARIOT IS NOW A HEAP OF ASHES.



"SMILING, KRISHNA THEN EMBRACED YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID —

IT IS FORTUNATE THAT YOU HAVE EMERGED VICTORIOUS IN THIS WAR. REMEMBER HOW YOU HAD ASKED ME TO PROTECT ARJUNA? HERE HE HAS EMERGED UNSCATHED FROM THE TERRIBLE WAR AND IS SAFE AND SOUND WITH ALL HIS BROTHERS.

IT IS BY YOUR GRACE, O LORD, THAT WE HAVE WON THIS WAR.



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VERILY THE SAGE VYASA HAD TOLD ME 'WHERE THERE IS DHARMA*, THERE IS KRISHNA. WHERE THERE IS KRISHNA THERE IS VICTORY'

"LATER, AS THEY SAT AROUND RELAXED, KRISHNA SAID —

IT WOULD BE BETTER NOT TO RETURN TO OUR OWN CAMP TONIGHT.

WE WILL FOLLOW YOUR ADVICE.

"BEFORE NIGHTFALL, THEY ALL PROCEEDED TO THE BANKS OF THE RIVER NEAR BY.

"WHEN THEY WERE SETTLING DOWN FOR THE NIGHT, YUDHISHTHIRA REMARKED —

I FEEL, O KRISHNA, IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU COULD GO TO HASTINAPURA AND PACIFY GANDHARI.

WITH YOUR REASONING AND PERSUASIVE TALK, YOU WILL SURELY CALM HER DOWN. THE VENERABLE SAGE VYASA WILL ALSO BE PRESENT THERE.

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"KRISHNA READILY AGREED AND LEFT FOR HASTINAPURA ON HIS CHARIOT.

JANAMEJAYA INTERRUPTED VAISHAMPAYANA —

WAS IT NECESSARY TO SEND KRISHNA FOR THIS TASK ?

YES, IT WAS. YUDHISHTHIRA REALISED HOW GANDHARI WOULD HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE NEWS OF THE DEATH OF HER SONS. UNASSUAGED, THAT VIRTUOUS WOMAN'S ANGER COULD ANNIHILATE THE WHOLE WORLD. THAT IS WHY YUDHISHTHIRA REQUESTED THE LORD HIMSELF TO RUSH TO HASTINAPURA AND SAVE THE SITUATION.

"ON REACHING HASTINAPURA, KRISHNA WENT TO DHRITARASHTRA'S PALACE.

"BOWING RESPECTFULLY TO THE AGED KING, HE GREETED SAGE VYASA AND GANDHARI WHO WERE ALSO SEATED THERE.

"HOLDING DHRITARASHTRA'S HAND IN HIS OWN, KRISHNA WEPT IN SYMPATHY. THEN CONTROLLING HIS EMOTIONS, HE SAID AFTER A WHILE —

BELIEVE ME, THE PANDAVAS DID TRY THEIR BEST TO PREVENT THIS DESTRUCTION OF YOUR RACE.

THEY BORE ALL THE INSULTS HEAPED ON THEM BY THE KAURAVAS AND SPENT SO MANY YEARS IN THE FOREST.

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"KRISHNA SAT FOR A WHILE TRYING TO CONSOLE THE AGED KING AND THE DESOLATE MOTHER WITH HIS SOOTHING WORDS AND GENTLE MANNER.

"JUST THEN, HE DIVINED THE EVIL PLOT EVOLVING IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND. STANDING UP WITH A START, HE SAID TO SAGE VYASA.

I MUST TAKE YOUR LEAVE NOW. ASHWATTHAMA HAS THOUGHT OF A WICKED PLAN TO DESTROY THE PANDAVAS.

"BOTH GANDHARI AND DHRITARASHTRA ASKED HIM TO GO.

YES, YOU MUST GO AND PROTECT THE PANDAVAS. WE WILL MEET YOU LATER.

"KRISHNA THEN RETURNED TO THE PANDAVAS AND TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

...SO WE MUST BE CAREFUL AND ALERT TONIGHT.

"MEANWHILE, ACCOMPANIED BY KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA, ASHWATTHAMA RUSHED TO SEE THE DYING DURYODHANA.

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"THEY FOUND DURYODHANA BLEEDING PROFUSELY AND TOSSING AND TURNING HELPLESSLY IN AGONY.

"QUICKLY THEY GOT OFF FROM THE CHARIOT AND SAT BESIDE HIM.

"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THE KING IN THIS PATHETIC STATE. WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES, HE SAID—

OH! WHAT IS THIS WORLD WHERE A KING OF YOUR MIGHT AND STATURE CAN BE LEFT TO ROLL IN THE DUST.

WHERE IS YOUR GREAT ARMY, YOUR ROYAL UMBRELLA, YOUR POMP AND VALOUR? SURELY NOTHING IN THE WORLD CAN BE RELIED UPON. IT IS TRANSIENT AND EPHEMERAL.

"DURYODHANA TOO BROKE DOWN AT ASHWATTHAMA'S DISPLAY OF SORROW.

EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD IS DESTINED FOR DESTRUCTION. APPARENTLY MY MOMENT OF DOOM HAS ALSO COME. HENCE YOU FIND ME IN THIS STATE.

YET I AM HAPPY THAT NEVER ONCE DID I TURN MY BACK IN WAR. IT WAS ONLY BY CHEATING THAT THE ENEMY COULD DESTROY ME. I HAVE BEEN TRUE TO MY DUTY AS A KSHATRIYA. SO DO NOT GRIEVE FOR ME, FRIENDS.

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"THE TEARS IN DURYODHANA'S EYES FILLED ASHWATTHAMA WITH RAGE.

EVEN MY FATHER'S DEATH BROUGHT ABOUT BY DECEIT DID NOT HURT ME AS MUCH AS YOUR DESTRUCTION AT THE HANDS OF THOSE WICKED PANDAVAS...

"CLENCHING HIS FISTS HE SAID —

...I SWEAR TO YOU BY EVERYTHING SACRED THAT I WILL SEND ALL THE PANCHALAS AND THE PANDAVAS TO DEATH TONIGHT. GIVE ME YOUR PERMISSION TO DO SO.

"DURYODHANA WAS TOUCHED. ADDRESSING KRIPA, HE SAID —

ACHARYA, PLEASE BRING WATER IN A VESSEL.

"WHEN KRIPACHARYA DID SO, DURYODHANA SAID FORMALLY —

I REQUEST YOU TO INSTALL ASHWATTHAMA AS THE COMMANDER OF OUR ARMY.

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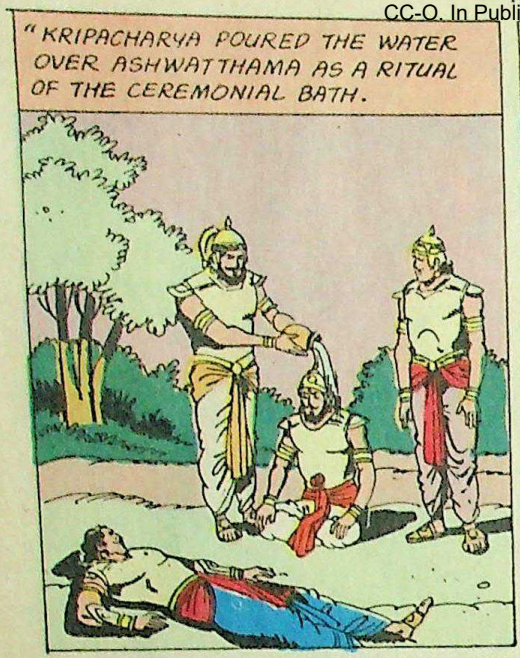

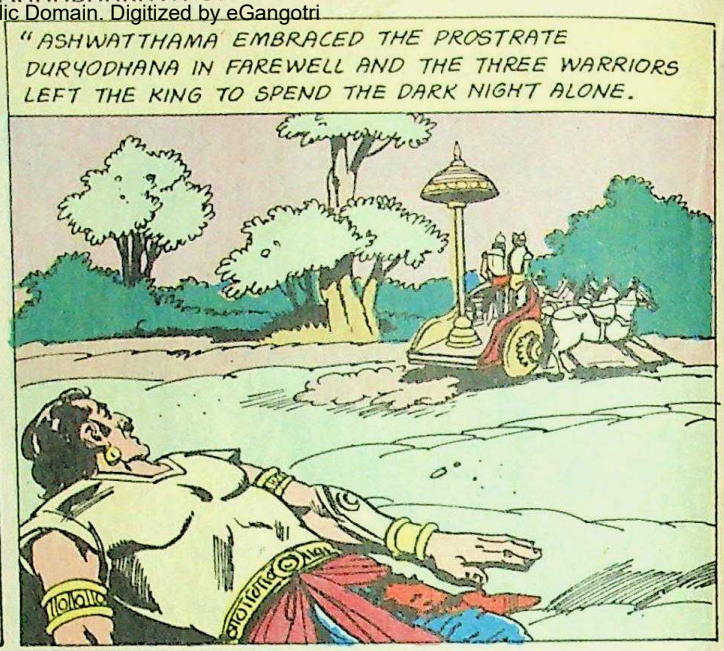

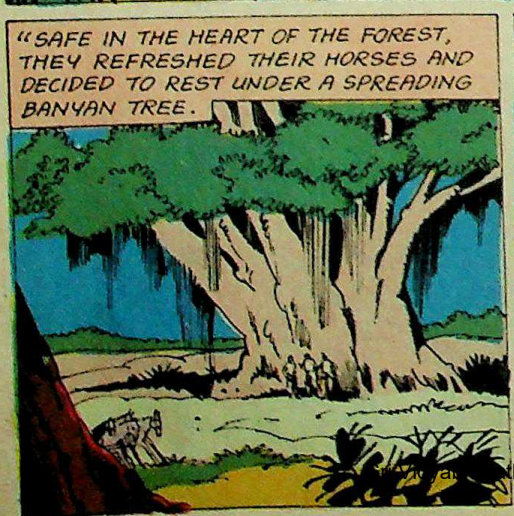

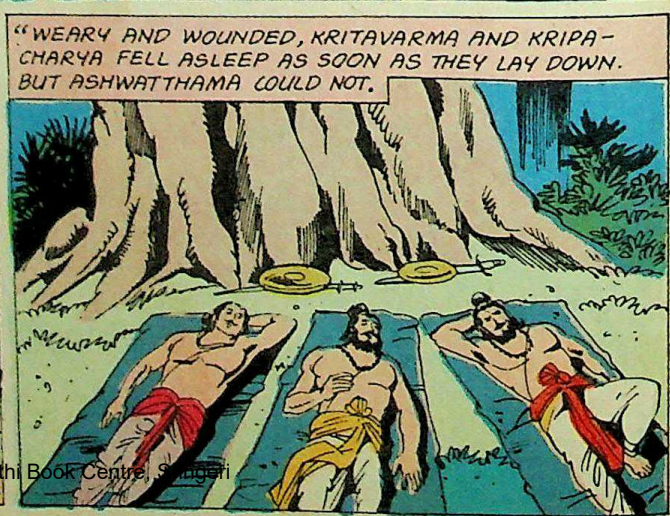

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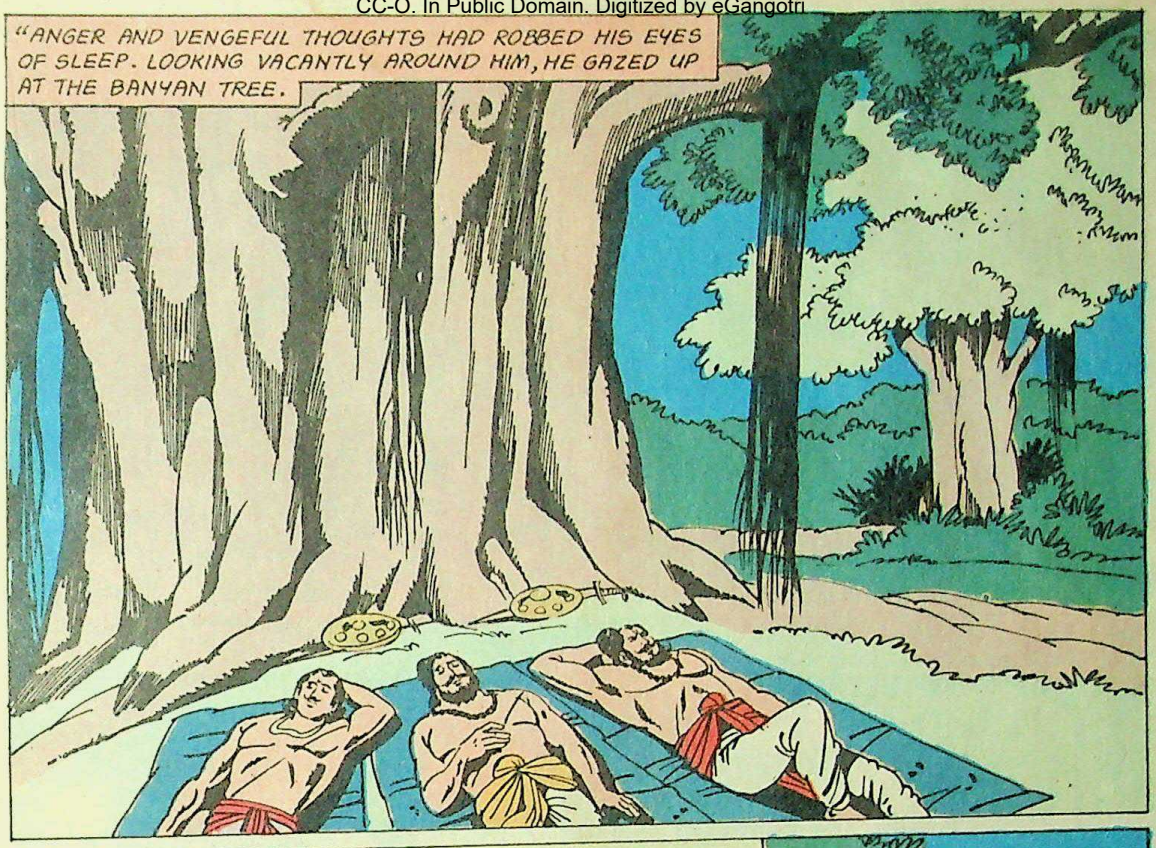

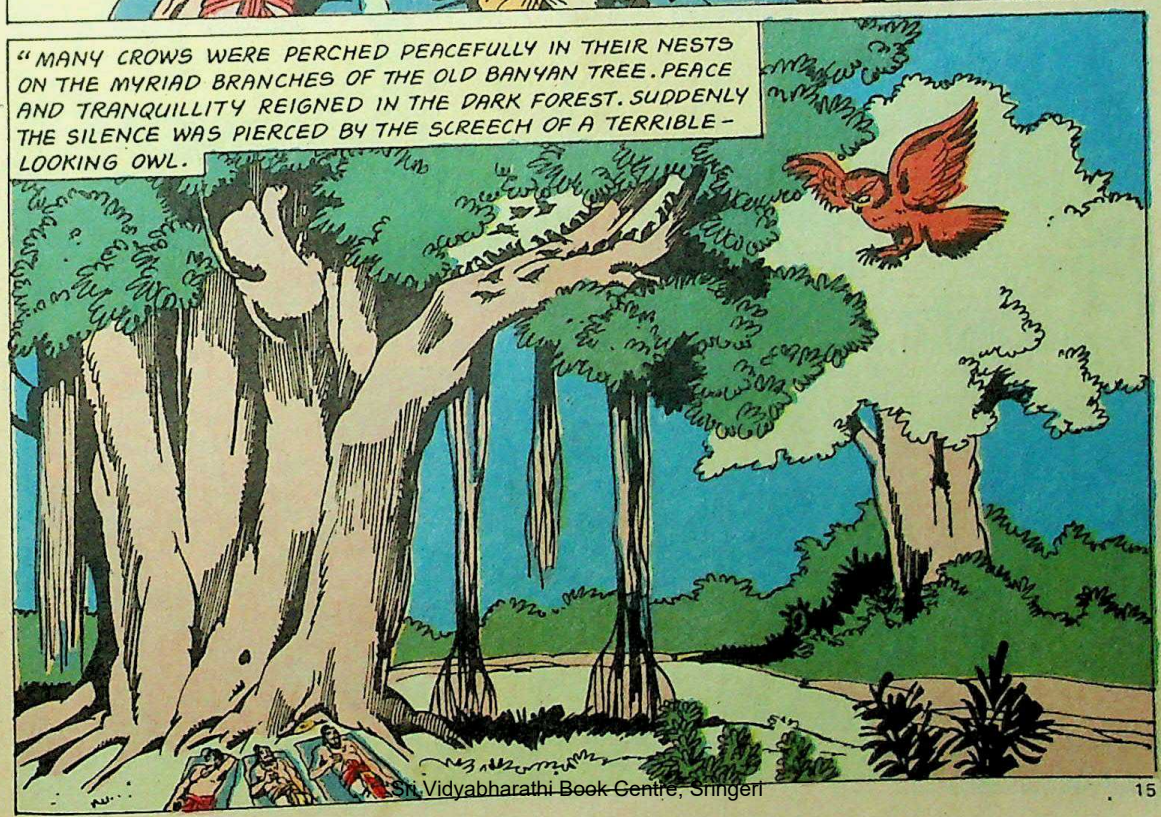

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"HE SWEPT DOWN ON THE SLEEPING CROWS AND ATTACKED THEM WITHOUT MERCY.

IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE PLACE WAS STREWN WITH THE REMAINS OF A MYRIAD CROWS. THE OWL SEEMED PLEASED WITH HIMSELF.

"WATCHING THIS FROM BELOW, AN IDEA TOOK ROOT IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND.

THIS BIRD HAS INDEED SHOWED ME THE WAY. I KNOW WHAT I MUST DO NOW.

I HAVE VOWED BEFORE DURYODHANA TO KILL THE PANDAVAS. IF I USE FAIR MEANS, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO KILL THEM. I MUST THEREFORE THINK OF A CUNNING PLAN.

IT IS WISER TO USE A FOOLPROOF THOUGH FOUL METHOD THAN TAKE A FOOLHARDY CHANCE TO DEFEAT THEM IN A FAIR FIGHT NOW. LIKE THIS OWL, I TOO WILL ATTACK THE UNSUSPECTING PANDAVAS WHILE THEY ARE ASLEEP.

"EXCITED AT THE PROSPECT, HE ROUSED KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA FROM THEIR SLUMBER.

LISTEN! I HAVE THOUGHT OF AN EXCELLENT IDEA. WE WILL ATTACK AND KILL THE PANDAVAS WHILE THEY ARE ASLEEP.

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"HORRIFIED AT HIS SUGGESTION, THEY GAZED AT HIM SPEECHLESS WITH SHOCK. ASHWATTHAMA SAID—

A MIGHTY RULER OF ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS LIES IN THE DUST. ONLY THREE OF US NOW REMAIN FROM THAT ARMY. WHAT DO YOU THINK WE CAN DO NOW TO SET MATTERS RIGHT?

"KRIPACHARYA TRIED TO COUNSEL THE EXCITED ASHWATTHAMA.

VALOUR AND VIRTUE ARE BOTH ESSENTIAL FOR A MAN. IT IS FUTILE MERELY TO THINK OF A GOOD DEED WITHOUT TAKING ANY ACTION. IT IS EQUALLY FOOLISH TO PLUNGE INTO ACTIVITY WITHOUT ANY CONSIDERATION OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

DURYODHANA WAS GREEDY AND ILL-ADVISED. CRUEL AND IMPATIENT, HE REFUSED TO LISTEN TO WELL-MEANING FRIENDS AND MADE ENEMIES OF THE PANDAVAS. WE FOLLOWED HIM AND HAVE REACHED THIS SORRY STATE.

MY OWN MIND NOW REFUSES TO FUNCTION. LET US NOW GO TO DHRITARASHTRA, GANDHARI AND VIDURA AND SEEK THEIR COUNSEL. THEY WILL SURELY GUIDE US PROPERLY.

"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT DENY THE WISDOM OF THE ACHARYA'S WORDS. YET HE WAS ADAMANT.

EVERYONE OF US FEELS CONVINCED THAT HIS WAY OF THINKING IS THE ONLY RIGHT AND PROPER ONE. I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND AND I WILL ACT ACCORDINGLY.

THE PANDAVAS WILL BE SLEEPING PEACEFULLY WITH THEIR ARMOURS CAST OFF. ONLY AFTER I HAVE KILLED ALL OF THEM WILL I FEEL I HAVE AVENGED THE DEATH OF MY FATHER.

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"KRIPACHARYA SAID —

YOU SEEM TO HAVE MADE UP YOUR MIND. BUT, ANYWAY, SLEEP AWHILE AND REST YOURSELF. TOMORROW MORNING WE WILL BOTH COME WITH YOU TO ATTACK THE PANDAVAS. YOU WILL FEEL REFRESHED AFTER SOME REST.

"ASHWATTHAMA SAW THROUGH THE ACHARYA'S GENTLE PERSUASION. HE SHOUTED —

HOW CAN A MAN FILLED WITH ANXIETY, SORROW, ANGER OR DESIRE SLEEP ? I AM TROUBLED BY ALL OF THESE. I CANNOT CONTROL MYSELF NOW. I WILL REST ONLY AFTER GETTING RID OF ALL THE ENEMIES.

"WHEN ASHWATTHAMA BEGAN TO HARNESS THE HORSES TO HIS CHARIOT, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA TOO GOT UP.

WAIT ! ASHWATTHAMA, WE TOO WILL COME WITH YOU.

THEN HURRY UP. DON YOUR ARMOUR AND TAKE UP YOUR WEAPONS.

"THE THREE OF THEM PROCEEDED TO THE PANDAVA CAMP.

"ASHWATTHAMA WHISPERED TO HIS COMPANIONS —

YOU GUARD THE GATE OF THE CAMP. I WILL ENTER THE CAMP NOW AND CREATE HAVOC. YOU TWO MAKE SURE NO ONE ESCAPES.

"AT THE GATE OF THE CAMP, A STRANGE SIGHT MET THEIR EYES. AN ENORMOUS MONSTER LOOMED LARGE IN THEIR PATH.

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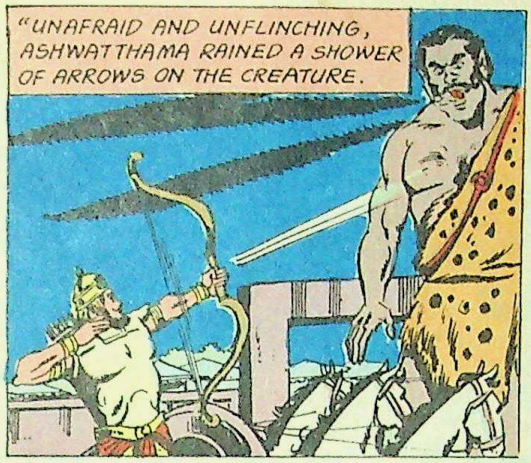

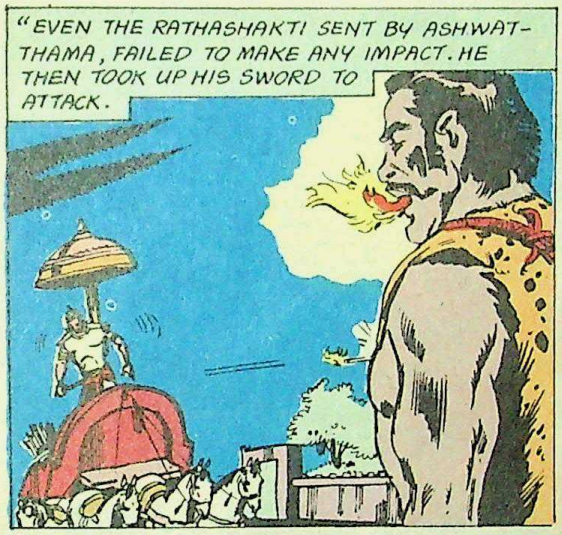

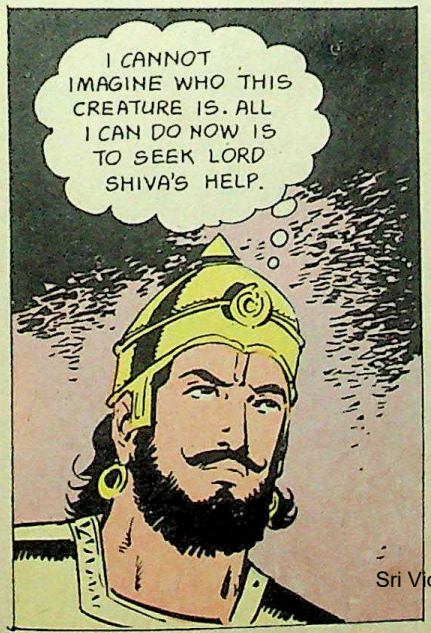

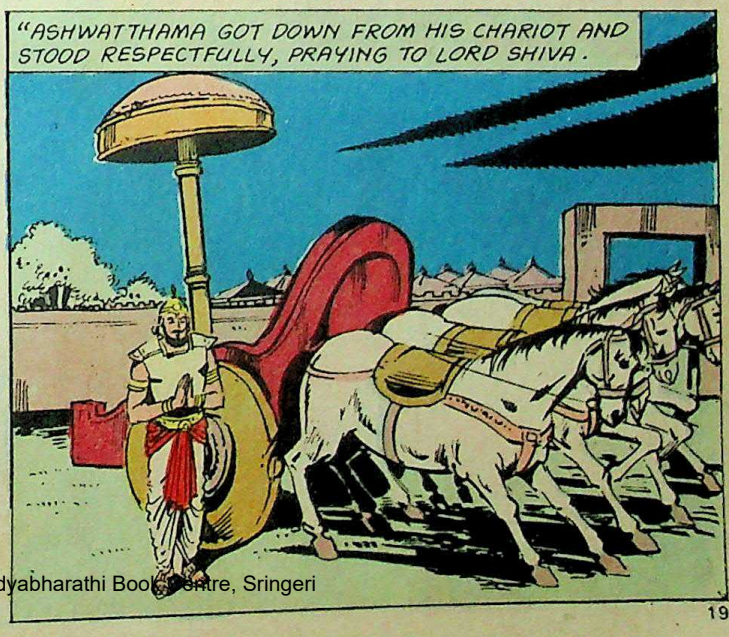

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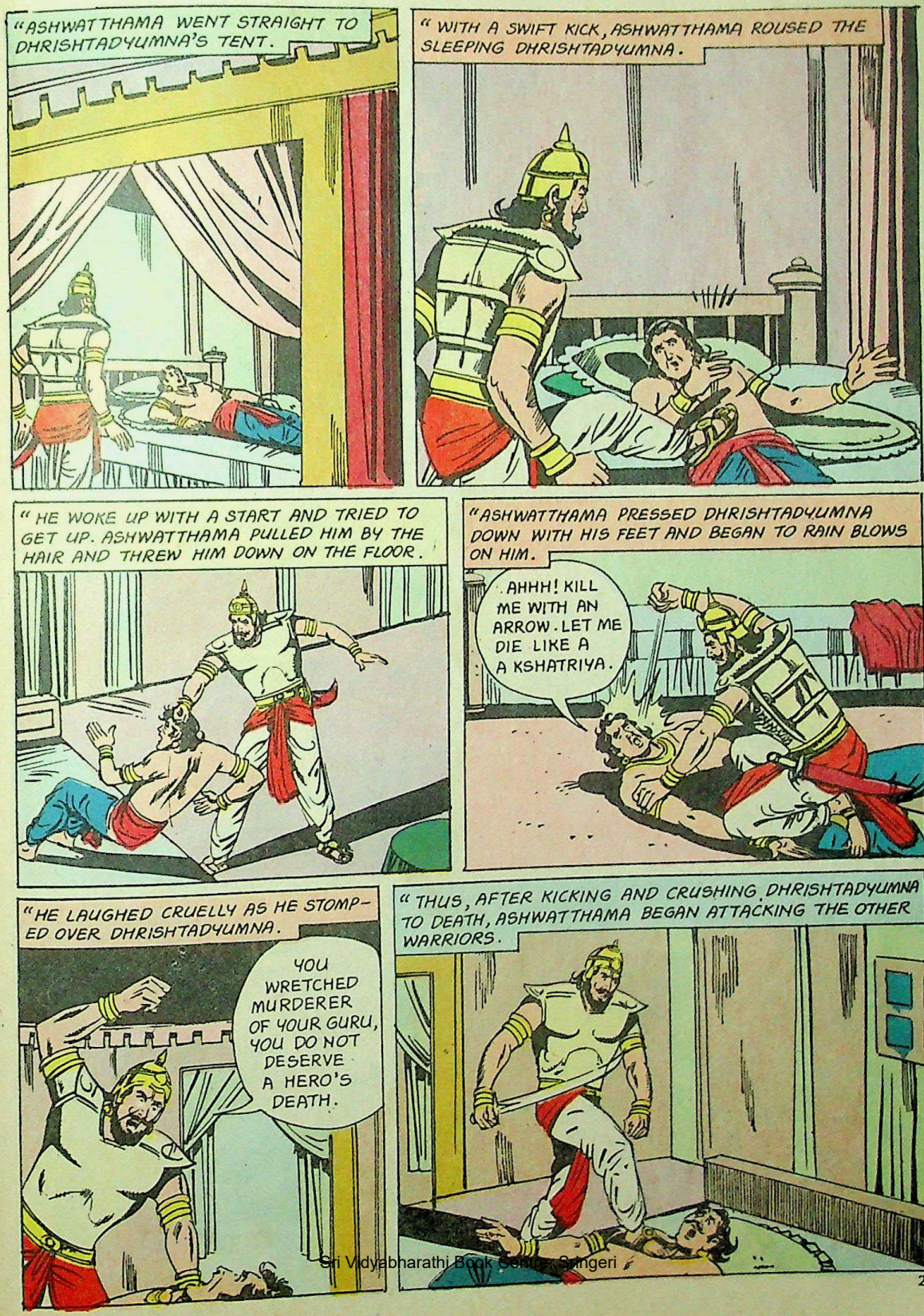

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"THE SAME CRUEL PROCESS WAS REPEATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

"THE CRY OF THE VICTIMS WOKE UP THE GUARDS AND THE WOMENFOLK. THEY SCREAMED ALOUD.

HURRY UP! RUN! RUN! SOME RAKSHASA HAS ENTERED THE CAMP AND KILLED DHRISHTADYUMNA.

"LIKE MUTE AND HELPLESS ANIMALS, MANY WARRIORS WERE SLAUGHTERED BY ASHWATTHAMA.

"SOON SHIKHANDI AND THE OTHER WARRIORS, WHO HAD EARLIER ESCAPED THE MIGHTY BATTLE UNSCATHED, WERE KILLED WHILE STILL HALF ASLEEP.

"ONE BY ONE, ALL THE SONS OF DRAUPADI AND ALL THE PANCHALAS WERE KILLED.

"IN HIS FURY, ASHWATTHAMA ATTACKED EVEN THE ANIMALS OF THE ENEMY CAMP.

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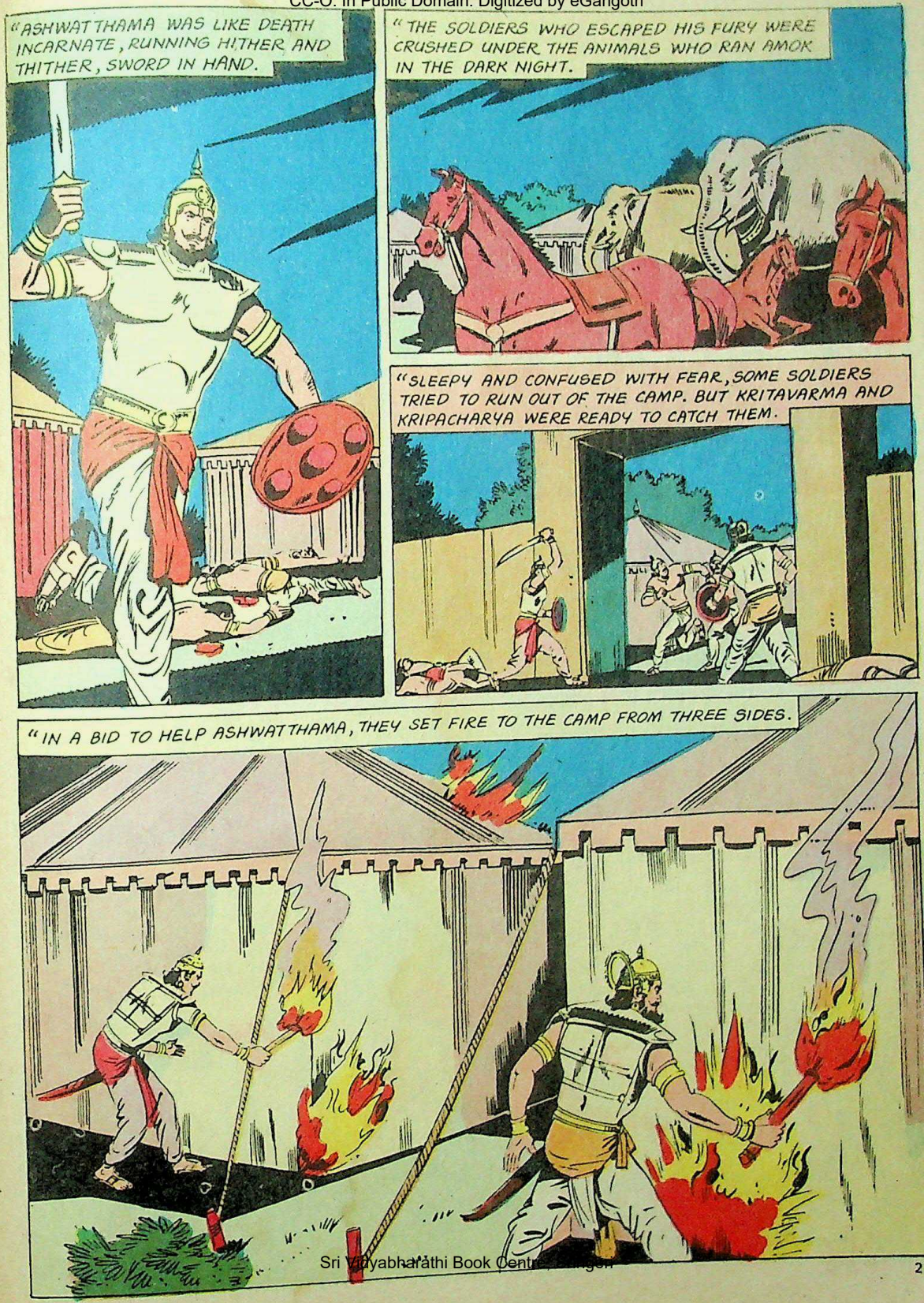

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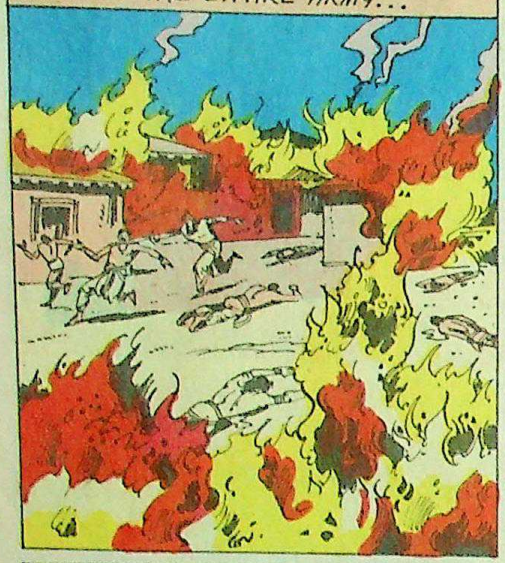
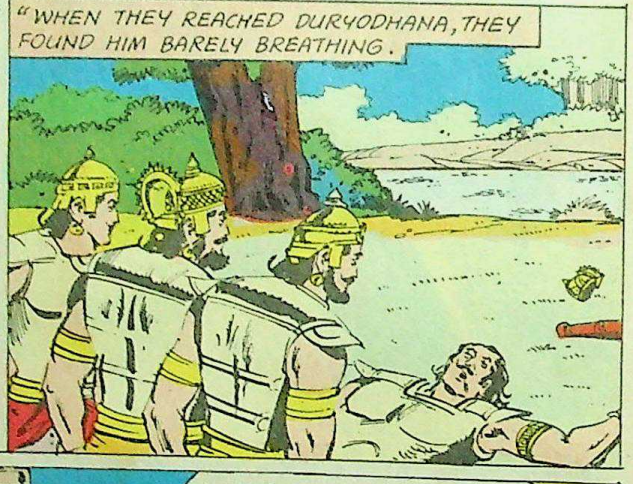
"IN THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF THE RAGING FIRE ASHWATTHAMA MANAGED TO DESTROY THE ENTIRE ARMY...



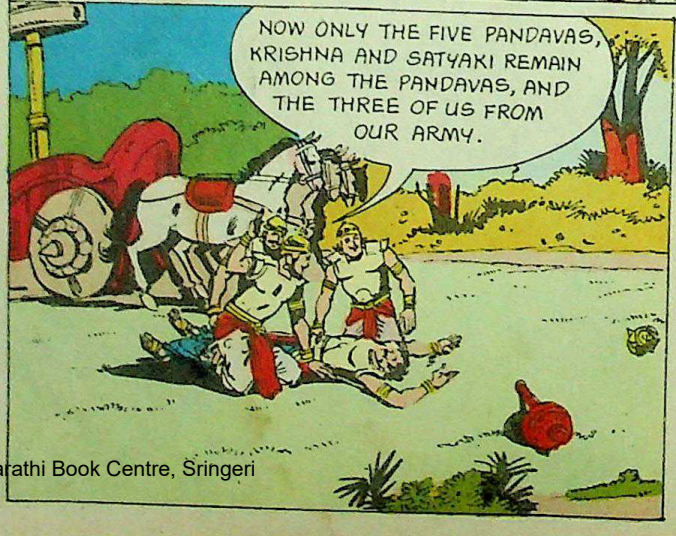
"...SO THAT WHEN HE EMERGED AT DAYBREAK AFTER THE MASSACRE, THE CAMP LAY AS SILENT AS IT HAD BEEN WHEN HE HAD ENTERED IT EARLIER IN THE NIGHT.

"ASHWATTHAMA, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA PIERCED THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT WITH THEIR CRIES OF REJOICING.

"WHEN THEY REACHED DURYODHANA, THEY FOUND HIM BARELY BREATHING.



"ASHWATTHAMA WIPED THE BLOOD SPOUTING FROM DURYODHANA'S MOUTH AND SAID —



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"THE NEWS REVIVED DURYODHANA LONG ENOUGH TO SAY —

ASHWATTHAMA! YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME WHAT BHEESHMA, DRONA OR KARNA COULD NOT DO. BLESS YOU! NOW WE WILL ALL MEET IN HEAVEN.

"WITH THESE WORDS, DURYODHANA BREATHED HIS LAST. THE MIGHTY WARRIOR WHO HAD BEEN THE FIRST TO ENTER THE BATTLEFIELD WAS AMONG THE LAST TO DIE.

"BRIEFLY EMBRACING THE DEPARTED KING DURYODHANA THE THREE WARRIORS LEFT THE PLACE.

"VAISHAMPAYANA CONTINUED HIS NARRATION —

WHEN SANJAYA HEARD THE NEWS OF DURYODHANA'S DEATH, HE LOST THE POWER OF THE DIVINE VISION BESTOWED ON HIM BY SAGE VYASA. MEANWHILE, DHRISHTADYUMNA'S CHARIOTEER HAD SOMEHOW ESCAPED THE MASSACRE AND RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA WITH THE TERRIBLE NEWS.

"RELATING THE GRUESOME DETAILS OF THE MIDNIGHT MASSACRE, HE SAID—

O KING, I ALONE ESCAPED WHILE YOUR ENTIRE ARMY HAS BEEN DESTROYED.

"YUDHISHTHIRA FAINTED WITH SHOCK. SATYAKI CAUGHT HIM AS HE FELL.

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"ON RECOVERING, YUDHISHTHIRA LAMENTED ALOUD—

ALAS! I HAVE LOST ALL AFTER WINNING THE WAR. MY WARRIORS WHO HAD ESCAPED THE ARROWS OF THE MIGHTY KARNA AND DRONA HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THEIR OWN CARELESSNESS.

"AFTER SENDING NAKULA TO FETCH DRAUPADI, YUDHISHTHIRA SORROWFULLY WENT TO HIS CAMP WITH HIS OTHER BROTHERS.

"HE COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THAT AWFUL SIGHT AND, CRYING INCONSOLABLY FELL DOWN IN A SWOON.

"EVEN AS THE OTHER PANDAVAS TRIED TO CONSOLE HIM, NAKULA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE WITH DRAUPADI.

"AGITATED AS SHE WAS WITH THE NEWS, THE SCENE OF MASSACRE WAS TOO TRAGIC A SIGHT FOR HER. BHEEMA CAUGHT HER JUST IN TIME AS SHE FAINTED.

"WHEN SHE RECOVERED A LITTLE, SHE GLARED AT YUDHISHTHIRA, AND SAID—

SHOULD I CONGRATULATE YOU ON CONQUERING THE EARTH AFTER SACRIFICING YOUR SONS?

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I AM BURNING WITH RAGE AT THIS MONSTROUS ACT. NOW YOU MUST AVENGE OUR DEAR ONES' DEATHS. I SWEAR I WILL NOT MOVE FROM HERE TILL YOU KILL THAT WICKED SON OF DRONA.

"SHE TOOK UP A POSE OF MEDITATION AND SAT DOWN RIGHT THERE ON THE BATTLEFIELD. YUDHISHTHIRA TRIED TO REASON WITH HER.

YOU KNOW THAT YOUR BROTHERS AND SONS HAVE DIED LIKE HEROES ON THE BATTLEFIELD. NOW ASHWATTHAMA HAS ESCAPED INTO THE FOREST.

EVEN IF WE DO MANAGE TO KILL HIM, HOW WILL WE CONVINCE YOU OF HIS DEATH ?

I KNOW THAT ASHWATTHAMA HAS A JEWEL ON HIS HEAD. BRING IT TO ME.

"TURNING TO BHEEMA, SHE SAID —

BHEEMA DEAR, I KNOW YOU ARE THE BRAVEST OF MEN. DO THIS FAVOUR FOR ME.

INDEED I WILL.

"AT ONCE BHEEMA MOUNTED HIS CHARIOT AND, WITH NAKULA AS HIS CHARIOTEER, SET OUT TO FOLLOW ASHWATTHAMA'S TRAIL.

"WHEN THEY LEFT, KRISHNA SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA —

IT IS NOT SAFE TO LET BHEEMA GO ALONE. ASHWATTHAMA HAS IN HIS POSSESSION A POWERFUL WEAPON CALLED BRAHMASHIRA* WHICH CAN SET THE WORLD AFLAME.

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* CELESTIAL WEAPON

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DRONA HAD FIRST BESTOWED THIS WEAPON ON ARJUNA. ASHWATTHAMA PERSUADED HIS FATHER TO GIVE IT TO HIM TOO. I KNOW THAT ASHWATTHAMA CAN BE VERY DEVIOUS, CUNNING AND WILL STOP AT NOTHING. WHY, HE EVEN TRIED TO FLATTER ME TO GIVE HIM MY CHAKRA ONCE. WE MUST PROTECT BHEEMA NOW.

"KRISHNA ASCENDED HIS CHARIOT TAKING ARJUNA AND YUDHISHTHIRA WITH HIM.

"THE CHARIOT FLEW THROUGH THE AIR AND REACHED BHEEMA IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS.

"THEY FOUND ASHWATTHAMA CLAD IN BARK, SITTING AMIDST VYASA AND OTHER SAGES, ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER GANGA.

"BHEEMA RAN UP TO HIM WITH HIS BOW AND ARROW.

COME ON NOW! ARISE AND FIGHT.

"ASHWATTHAMA PICKED UP A BLADE OF GRASS AND MEDITATED ON THE CELESTIAL WEAPON.

MAY THIS WEAPON DESTROY ALL THE PANDAVAS.

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"NO SOONER HAD HE SAID THIS THAN ENORMOUS FLAMES BEGAN TO EMERGE FROM THAT BLADE OF GRASS.

"KRISHNA HAD READ ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND. HE SAID TO ARJUNA —

YOU TOO RECEIVED THIS WEAPON FROM DRONA. NOW IS THE TIME TO USE IT.

"JUMPING DOWN FROM THE CHARIOT, ARJUNA TOOK UP HIS BOW AND ARROW.

MAY THIS WEAPON COUNTER ASHWAT-THAMA'S WEAPON.

"THE ENTIRE WORLD APPEARED TO SHAKE AND TREMBLE WITH THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THE TWO POWERFUL WEAPONS.

"JUST THEN, THE SAGES VYASA AND NARADA, GOT UP AND STOOD BETWEEN ARJUNA AND ASHWATTHAMA.

NO ONE IN THE PAST HAS EVER DARED TO USE THIS WEAPON ON HUMAN BEINGS. HOW COULD BOTH OF YOU DO SO?

"ARJUNA SAID —

I USED IT TO COUNTER ASHWATTHAMA'S ATTACK. NOW I WILL CERTAINLY DO AS YOU SAY. I WILL TRY MY BEST TO RECALL IT.

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"IT WAS NOT AN EASY WEAPON TO RECALL. HAVING OBTAINED IT AFTER SEVERE AUSTERITIES, ARJUNA HAD THE POWER AND ABILITY TO WITHDRAW IT.

"ASHWATTHAMA HOWEVER COULD NOT DO SO, MUCH AS HE TRIED. HE APPEALED TO VYASA.

I USED THIS WEAPON IN FEAR OF BHEEMA, SAYING, NOW MAY ALL PANDAVAS BE DESTROYED. BUT NOW I CANNOT WITHDRAW IT.

"SAGE VYASA SAID TO ASHWATTHAMA—

DO YOU KNOW THAT THE LAND WHERE SUCH TWO POWERFUL WEAPONS CLASH REMAINS RAINLESS AND PARCHED FOR TWELVE YEARS? THAT IS WHY ARJUNA DID NOT TRY TO DESTROY YOUR WEAPON.

THE PANDAVAS DO NOT WANT TO WIN BY UNFAIR MEANS. NOW TO COMPENSATE FOR YOUR WICKED ACT, GIVE THEM THE JEWEL FROM YOUR HEAD, AND ALSO RECALL YOUR WEAPON.

"ASHWATTHAMA REPLIED—

OH! THIS GEM IS MOST PRECIOUS TO ME. BUT I WILL GIVE IT UP IN DEFERENCE TO YOUR WISHES.

AS FOR THE WEAPON, I CANNOT RECALL IT. LET ITS EFFECT BE DIRECTED TO THE FUTURE PROGENY OF THE PANDAVAS IF NOT TO THEM.

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"ASHWATTHAMA'S CURSE WOULD HAVE AFFECTED THE UNBORN BABY OF UTTARA, ABHIMANYU'S WIDOW. BUT KRISHNA INTERVENED IN TIME —

YOU WICKED ASHWATTHAMA, DESPITE YOUR CURSE, THIS SON OF UTTARA WILL BE REVIVED AT BIRTH.

NOT ONLY WILL HE SURVIVE YOUR CURSE, BUT WILL GROW UP TO BE A MIGHTY KING, AND CONTINUE THE PANDAVA DYNASTY.

I TOO BLESS THE BOY WHO WILL BE CALLED PAREEKSHIT.

"THE PANDAVAS RETURNED IN HASTE TO DRAUPADI WITH THE PRECIOUS JEWEL. ASHWATTHAMA WENT MOROSELY INTO THE JUNGLE.

"BHEEMA PRESENTED THE GEM TO DRAUPADI.

NOW ASHWATTHAMA IS DEFEATED AND DEMORALISED. BEING OUR GURU'S SON, WE HOWEVER, SPARED HIS LIFE.

O YUDHISHTHIRA. LET THIS GEM ADORN YOUR FOREHEAD NOW.

AS YOU WISH.

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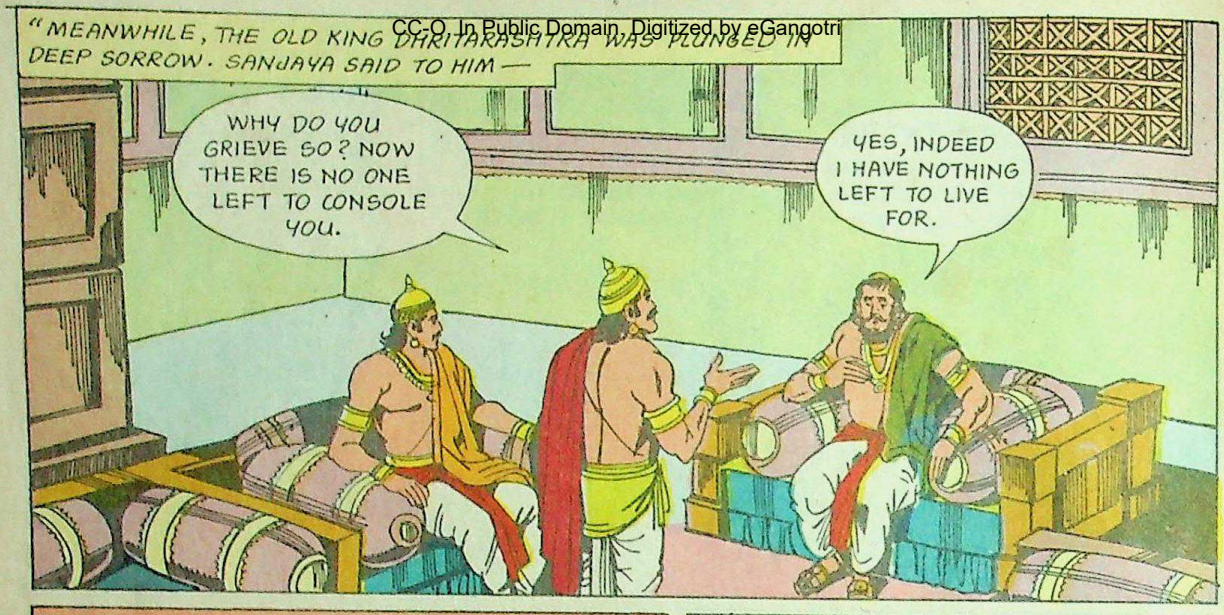

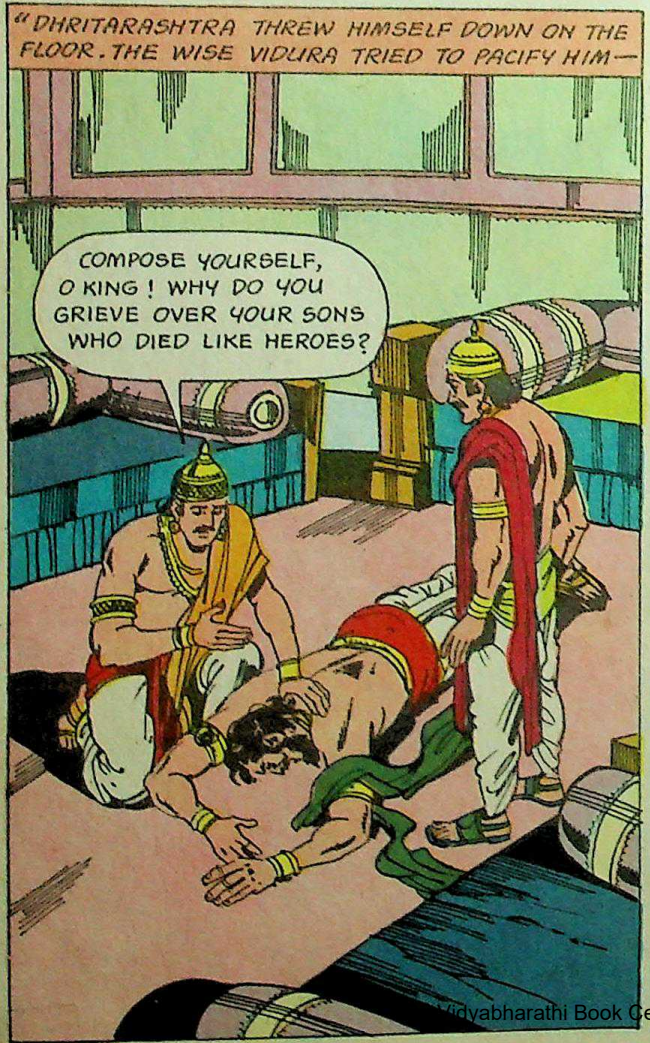

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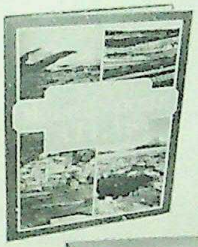

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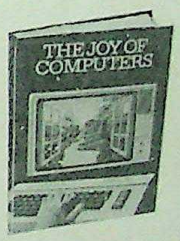

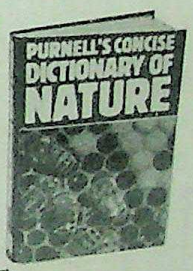

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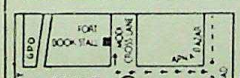

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RAM & SHYAM IN THE TRIBAL EXPERIENCE

PARLE

RAM'S AUNT AND UNCLE LIVE ON A BEAUTIFUL ISLAND. RAM & SHYAM ARE INVITED TO SPEND THE HOLIDAYS WITH THEM.

BEING INQUISITIVE, THEY SET OUT TO EXPLORE THE ISLAND, AS USUAL, MUNCHING POPPINS ON THEIR WAY.

JUST THEN...

ARROWS?

BUT WHY?

ZIP!

ZIP!

THE TRIBALS MUST BE SCARED OF US.

TO SHOW WE'RE FRIENDS, WE'LL THROW THE ARROW BACK WITH A PACK OF POPPINS ATTACHED TO IT.

LIKE A JAVELIN, SHYAM THROWS THE ARROW WHICH PIERCES A TREE.

PARLE POPPINS

SLOWLY, THE TRIBALS COME OUT OF HIDING AND PICK THE PACK OF POPPINS. THEY POP ONE EACH AND SEEM TO LOVE THEM.

WARRAH! WARRAH!

JOYOUS, THEY RUN TO RAM & SHYAM AND HUG THEM IN FRIENDSHIP.

OUR DEAR FRIENDS

WHEN RAM & SHYAM HAVE POPPINS, YOU CAN BE SURE THEY'LL NEVER RUN OUT OF FRIENDS.

PARLE POPPINS

Lickable. Likeable. Lovable.

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